

## **Bicycle Safety- A Deeper Approach**

From the second US cyclists untangle their U-locks, open their garages, or slip out front doors, they become second-class travelers. Cars dominate America. They signal freedom and convenience, and they enjoy a massive network of roads, highways, and interstates. In this driving mania, bicycling has turned into a relatively rare and dangerous activity. One can see this in the flow of US tax dollars, where only 2% of recent federal transportation spending goes toward bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure (Fox, 2023). Or one can look at domestic trends regarding transportation, where 87% of all trips are conducted via car or truck while only 1% are done by bike (Strauss, 2021). If nothing else, one need only check injury statistics to see the result of this culture. 1,230 preventable deaths and nearly 300,000 preventable injuries occurred in 2021, leading one to wonder if biking will ever be a safe or practical way to get around (“Bicycle Deaths”, 2023).

America has gotten to this point for many reasons. Former World Tour cyclist Phil Gaimon exposes one of them- Americans simply do not understand road laws. Critical rules like “taking the lane”, “sharing the road”, and the “three foot law” are often misunderstood or completely unknown to drivers leading to dangerous conditions (Ling, 2023). And since inadequate biking infrastructure forces cyclists into direct contact with these drivers, it is no wonder that half of Americans surveyed are afraid for their safety on the roads (Strauss, 2021). Another reason is the recent growth of new suburban centers. New towns increasingly rely on arterial roads that have more lanes, higher speed limits, and fewer crosswalks to make driving easier, but they increase the danger to bikers and pedestrians (Badger et. al. 2023). It appears Americans are still prioritizing driving over bicycling.

Common sense policies like stronger laws, more bike lanes, and educational campaigns are excellent starting points to make a change. Yet to achieve the societal shift that is necessary

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for lasting results, more creative and institutional means are necessary. Look at Amsterdam. Fueled by popular demand in the 1970s, the Dutch transformed their town into a place where 60% of all trips are conducted by bike. Targeted campaigns raised parking fees and deliberately complicated road conditions while public transit brought bikers within range of its growing network of bike lanes. Novel “safe system” principles such as self-correcting curbs, reduced traffic lights to encourage attentivity, and the Puccini Method- a system of road cues via style, shape, and color that intuitively guide bikers down the correct path- sought to channel human proclivity for error into a smoother biking experience. The result is simple- Amsterdam became a bike town and the safety data followed suit. Bike crashes went down as did their severity, and residents perceive biking to be an exceedingly safe activity (Dudley, 2022).

Americans must **want** change if bicycling is to get safer. If they choose to look, the blueprint is there for a safe and prosperous biking future.

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